

DECEMBER 24, 1942

Christmas When It Comes

IT must be known to our readers by this time that we jump most of our hurdles a fortnight before we come to them. We have no choice. Even when times were normal we had to start the programmes on their way ten days before anyone heard them, and ten days are not enough now that the war has reached the railways and the post office. We walk, in fact, by faith and not by sight, as believers so often must, but it is a particularly awkward fate when the thing believed in and not seen is a festival that events may cloud any moment with sadness. We can therefore only express the hope that Christmas Day when it comes will seem as good an occasion for rejoicing as it seems to us now looking several days ahead. No one will wish to rejoice and do nothing else, and some will not be able to rejoice at all. Only the bravest can say of their lost sons, as a father said to us the other day, "He had a happy life, and an honourable death"; and having said it, and felt it, recover their serenity. Few of us are cast in that noble mould. But we can go part of the way with that brave father and feel that far worse could have happened to all of us this year than has happened. We can feel that brooding over what can never be recovered is a poor way of showing gratitude for the indestructible things our sons have preserved for us, and see that already their courage has brought the end into sight. For it is a different battle-field at which we gaze these last few weeks. Few of us can ever have felt that the war would not be won; but we can almost feel now that we know how soon victory will come. That justifies some rejoicing. And the cheerfulness of our soldiers, sailors, and airmen under all strains and in every kind of danger and discomfort justifies a good deal more. Not to be cheerful while they are is to fail them where they should be surest of support. We must not fail them. If we can't eat and drink ourselves into cheerfulness we can think ourselves into serenity and into the next best thing to cheerfulness—confidence that the worst Christmas has passed, the worst obstacles have been surmounted, and the worst moments of disillusionment and bitterness have faded into a sombre pride.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

HIGHER PURCHASE.

Sir,—The witty little sketch under the above title brought a lump to even my tough old throat. The house could have been ours, except that there was no canary, no tap, and no washing machine. But the floor and the range were just like that. I only wish the writer could live for only six or seven years in such a house, have five babies, and the sort of health that goes with five babies in rapid succession, have to pump and carry every drop of water required for the washing that five babies necessitate, and then write the sketch afresh. Let the kitchen floor and range look as they will, there is nothing my soul yearns for as it does for a washing machine. I would like to see Social Security Benefits include a free washing machine to mothers of five and more children. I am sure the writer of the story was once at the unappetising crawling yearling stage also, and was the cause of the usual uninviting baby washing, too. And for that matter, history records the tale of a Woman who had to have her Child in a stable, and cradle it in a manger. She, poor soul, was not lucky enough to have a washing machine. To the mother of five, I would say, "Good luck to you! You deserve it!"

—JOY FLANAGAN (Motupiko).

LET US HAVE HUMOUR.

Sir,—While the dissection of likes and dislikes in the programmes is going on, may I put in a plea for the humorous record? We don't have nearly enough of these for the taste of the younger generation, who are after all the chief support of radio. I would suggest that a definite time should be given for humour (not when the children are being hustled off to school or to bed) and that it should be made a feature. Of course there is plenty of humour in the programmes now, but one so often picks it up only by accident.

MOTHER OF TWELVE (Tauranga).

"FANTASIA."

Sir,—Your film reviewer states, in his preview of *Fantasia*, that Disney has studiously avoided Stravinsky's own intentions. I read lately that Stravinsky himself, when he saw "The Rite of Spring," vowed that it was exactly what he had in mind when he composed it. He signed a contract to do more work for Disney. Also, since when has Dorothy Thompson been a film reviewer?

DISNEY FAN (Christchurch).

(Our film reviewer merely quoted the music-critics [including Marsyas] who had "castigated Disney for studiously avoiding Stravinsky's own intentions." He did not agree with such music critics: on the contrary. The report that Stravinsky was well satisfied was printed in *Time*. Dorothy Thompson is a columnist: we quoted her as an example of a very hostile opinion on *Fantasia*.—Ed.)

OUR MUSIC CRITIC.

Sir,—I was delighted to read the letter from Dr. J. C. Beaglehole in support of your music critic "Marsyas." It is notorious that the disgruntled and peevish are ever ready to seize their pens and dash off indignant letters to the Press, while the well-fed and satisfied relax in contentment. But surely it is time that the admirers of "Marsyas" began to express

their views. As Dr. Beaglehole has pointed out, "Marsyas" is in the tradition of early Shaw and the other writers he has mentioned. This is a tradition of original and independent thinking which is, as yet, foreign to New Zealand in the realm of the Arts, and is to be hailed with approbation and applause.

—G. D. JENSEN (Seatoun).

(We have had other letters praising "Marsyas" and some attacking him. We have space for one only, and select the correspondent who writes over his own name.—Ed.)

POINTS FROM LETTERS

There are seven days in the week, and on all of them listeners write letters. Unfortunately there are only two columns in which we can place all this material. We are glad to receive it, and hope that it will continue to flow in; but at present we are so far behind on several subjects that we are compelled to drop whole bundles of letters and pick single points out of the few that remain. In the meantime we cannot accept any more letters on *Christian Order*, *God In Nature*, *Communism* and *Atheism*, and *Wedding Rings*.

GOD IN NATURE:

Rob (Ahipara) asks, in reply to Lionel Cooney's remark that "what is good for the kea is bad for the lamb," how bad it is for the lamb. We must not, he says, attribute torments to animals that are the reflection of our own imagined sensations.

Lionel Cooney (Auckland) agrees that "much of Nature is beautiful" but argues that "such beauty may be 'totally inhospitable to man,' its existence is no proof of a beneficent Creator."

CHRISTIAN ORDER:

Student (Auckland) says that although the teachings of Christ as we find them in the Gospels are not "specifically socialist," Christ "did on occasions utter words" that pointed to socialism.

M. A. Stephenson (Ramarara) says that Christ was crucified not merely because He declared Himself the Son of God but because He exposed the rottenness of the social system.

H. C. McDonald (Ashburton) finds it surprising that "highly educated men" should find an "obvious connection" between faith and morality.

D. Ellwood (Riccarton) has "seldom seen such dodging and twisting" as he found in the *Any Questions?* sessions of the Christian Order Campaign, and suggests that it was "so-called religious people" Christ had in mind when He said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

G. M. Dymock (Gisborne) regrets that school-children to-day are "robbed of the lovely language of the Psalms and Gospels" and of the inspiration of Bible personalities.

NEW ZEALAND CULTURE:

"Nostalgic New Zealander" (Auckland) regrets that Professor Sewell in his *English Literature* talks did not take his hearers into less familiar ground.

C.C.C. (Cambridge) reminds critics of New Zealand culture that although "our life out here has only just begun," the sacred fire burns within us.

THE RING:

"Silver Wedding" (Dunedin) says that if women "are content to go through life wearing no ring" they should be "content also to get 'dirty looks' from those who see a ringless hand plus an infant."

"Fifty-fifty" (Palmerston North) wants to know why women only have to wear the badge of marriage. If "a man is single until proved otherwise" why "all this fuss about a woman who removes her ring?"

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT.

"ANOTHER MABEL" (Tauranga).—If we could we would; but copyright stands in the way.

THE SEX OF BELLS

IN our article on Victory Bells in a recent issue we said that "big bells, unlike big ships, are always 'he'". It has since been pointed out to us that although their names may be masculine, bells are feminine to bell-ringers, and are spoken of as "she".